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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**2008 Traffic Fatality Data Released**

There were 104 traffic fatalities on North Dakota roadways in 2008, a decrease of seven traffic fatalities from 2007. The 104 traffic fatalities occurred in 97 crashes.

Alcohol use and a lack of seat belts continue to be contributing factors in crashes. This year, alcohol was a contributing factor in 50 of the 104 deaths (48 percent), compared to last year's rate of 57 percent. There were nine fewer lives lost as a result of alcohol use this year.

Nearly three out of four people (59 of 81 fatalities) who were killed in traffic crashes were not wearing a seat belt, even though the vehicles were equipped with them. The 23 deaths not included in this number were pedestrian, motorcycle, or bicycle crashes. North Dakota has had an increase in the number of motorcycle traffic fatalities. In 2006, there were four; in 2007, there were 8 motorcycle fatalities; and this past year there were 13.

There were 38 single vehicle rollover crashes with 40 fatalities. Of the 40 fatalities, 36 of them were not wearing their seat belt; 32 were ejected.

Lieutenant Mike Gerhart of the North Dakota Highway Patrol states, "Although the number of fatality victims has decreased from the previous year, alcohol and lack of seat belt use contributes to many of the tragedies that occur on North Dakota roadways. The goal of the North Dakota Highway Patrol is to ensure that the traveling public makes it to their destination safely. Remember to always wear a seatbelt, and never drink and drive."

Karin Mongeon, Manager of the Traffic Safety Office, North Dakota Department of Transportation states, "The North Dakota Department of Transportation also has a goal to assure the safety of the traveling public. Drunk driving crashes can be prevented through personal accountability –through each person's conscious decision to never drink and drive. Also, the Department encourages the public to wear a seat belt every trip, every time. Seat belts save lives and decrease the severity of crash-related injuries."

The North Dakota Highway Patrol and North Dakota Department of Transportation work together on a number of traffic safety issues including seat belt use and impaired driving campaigns.

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